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"Jeanne songeait, sur l'herbe assise, grave et rose,"

the scene at the menagerie, *Ce que dit, le Public*, and the little poem describing Jeanne *en pénitence*,

"Jeanne était sur pain sec dans le cabinet noir,"

are real masterpieces of child-nature, — flashes of insight into that world which early becomes a forgotten world by all but gentle or poetic spirits. The childhood that Victor Hugo draws is not the childhood that Wordsworth drew, at least in a thousand external features; but he seizes the internal element in its character, and his studies of its waywardness and charm, and particularly of the sentiments of age toward childhood, are new things in literature. Their results, as given here, are so abundant, as well as so good, that they give M. Hugo a clear and special title to be called the poet of childhood.

15. — *Charlotte Brontë: A Monograph*. By T. WEMYSS REID. New York: Scribner, Armstrong, & Co. 1877. Square 12mo. pp. 236.

MR. REID fails to show any other reason for the publication of this little book than that it is always pleasant to talk about the Brontës. In his Preface and opening chapter, it is true, he conveys the impression that he has at his disposal a considerable amount of new material, collected from Charlotte's letters to her nearest friends; but as the individual letters themselves appear in the text, we find that many of them have already been in the hands of Mrs. Gaskell, who published other parts of them than are here given, or sometimes even left them unused altogether, apparently because they had too little importance or individuality as compared with those that she selected. Mr. Reid's monograph, therefore, only supplements what he himself calls "one of the most fascinating and artistic biographies in the English language" by adding to the number, rather than the interest, of the published relics of the Brontës, and by giving us his own opinion as to Charlotte's character and life.

Briefly stated, this opinion is that her character has been pictured as too "morbid and melancholy," and her life as much too "joyless." "That during the later years in which this wonderful woman produced the works by which she has made her name famous her career was clouded by sorrow and oppressed by anguish, both mental and physical, is," says Mr. Reid, "perfectly true. . . . But it is not true that she was throughout her whole life the victim of that extreme depression of spirits which afflicted her at rare intervals, and which Mrs. Gaskell has presented to us with so much vividness and emphasis. . . . Those

who imagine that Charlotte Brontë's spirit was in any degree a morbid or melancholy one do her a singular injustice." This is the case which Mr. Reid sets out to prove, and which, to our mind at least, he fails so signally in proving as to suffer his own citations to defeat him. We turn from the reading of his evidence with a renewed conviction that the author of the admirable and now fairly classic "*Life of Charlotte Brontë*" not only studied her whole subject with most rare exactness, but that her portrayal of Charlotte's character was aided and perfected by a keen and appreciative sympathy as well. Certainly, if the letters quoted here are valuable in any way, it is as confirmation of the judgment which Mrs. Gaskell had pronounced. She "set out with the determination," says Mr. Reid, "that her work should be pitched in a particular key." If this is so, it was because her artist's instinct showed her that that haunting minor was the key with which the life she wrote of had accorded.

There is, indeed, something curiously naïve in Mr. Reid's unconsciousness that it is he who is endeavoring to "make a case," not Mrs. Gaskell, and something more than naïve in the fatality with which he contradicts himself at every turn. What are we to make of his assertion that Charlotte, when young, was "a happy and high-spirited girl," beside his picture, a few pages later, of the "ideal life led by the forlorn little girl" at six, wherein her brain was filled with alternately fantastic and gloomy pictures, and her nervous fears clearly so morbidly sensitive as to make much of her life a torture? Or with his sketch of the "strange, lonely, old-fashioned children," who made of their fellow-scholars the pitiful request that they would "teach them how to play"?

There is but one other matter in Mr. Reid's "monograph" to which we need refer, — his theory that Charlotte's visit to Brussels was the "turning-point in her life, which changed its currents, and gave to it a new purpose and a new meaning"; and, further, that "the 'storm and stress' period of Charlotte Brontë's life was not what the world believes it to have been." We desire only to point out that, inasmuch as he does not bring an atom of proof to the support of this belief, but only hints and grows mysterious over it without other effect than to leave the reader in the dark as to his meaning, he commits a sin, as a biographer, beside which any "fixed determination" of Mrs. Gaskell's is but trifling. When he will tell us what that "truth" is which he says "must be told" about the sorrow of her life in Brussels; when he will show us how "her spirit, if not her heart, had been captured and held captive in the Belgian city," — he will do more than he has done between these covers to throw new light upon the life of the writer of "*Jane Eyre*."